Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IDEC PHARMACEUTICALS ANNOUNCES POSITIVE PRELIMINARY RESULTS FOR PIVOTAL TRIAL OF IDEC-C2B8

SAN DIEGO, CA, May 21, 1996 -- IDEC Pharmaceuticals Corporation (Nasdaq: IDPH) today announced positive preliminary results from a Phase III pivotal trial of IDEC-C2B8, confirming the antibody's response rate and safety profile as seen in an earlier Phase II study of IDEC-C2B8 as a single-agent treatment for patients with relapsed low-grade or follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. IDEC has completed enrollment in its Phase III pivotal trial with a total of 166 patients. Preliminary analysis of the first 50 patients was reported today at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) by clinical investigator Dr. Peter McLaughlin of the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas.

Each of the patients participating in the 30-center trial received four weekly infusions of IDEC-C2B8. Of the first 48 evaluable patients, 23 responded to treatment with IDEC-C2B8, for an overall response rate of 47.9%. Six of these responses were complete responses (12.5%) and 17 were partial responses (35.4%). A median time to disease progression following treatment with IDEC-C2B8 has not been reached in the group of 48 patients; the median observation time following treatment is currently seven months.

In the pivotal Phase III trial, patients are also being monitored for the presence of a tumor marker gene, known as bcl-2, in the blood and in the bone marrow. Tracking this marker may provide information on patient outcome, as well as a way to monitor minimal residual disease after therapy. From the 166 patients enrolled in the trial, preliminary data is now available from an initial group of patients. The tumor marker gene reverted from positive to negative in the peripheral blood of 12 of 16 patients analyzed, and in the bone marrow of six of 12 patients. Research has shown that patients treated with conventional chemotherapy alone do not become bcl-2 negative in the bone marrow.

"These positive results experienced by the first 48 evaluable patients participating in our pivotal trial confirm the results from our previous Phase II study of IDEC-C2B8," commented William H. Rastetter, Ph.D., president and chief executive officer of IDEC. "In that earlier trial, we saw an overall response rate of 50% in 34 evaluable patients. Time to disease progression in those patients ranged from 4.4 to over 23.4 months, with a median time of 10.2 months." Dr. Rastetter noted that the full results of the pivotal Phase III trial would not be available until December 1996.

IDEC-C2B8 is a monoclonal antibody that is therapeutically active on its own and does not require the attachment of potentially toxic radioisotopes or other drugs to elicit its anti-tumor effect. The antibody targets a protein (the CD20 antigen) that is expressed on the surface of mature B cells and on B-cell tumors, but not on B-cell precursors or other tissues in the body. IDEC-C2B8 works by binding to its target antigen and recruiting host defenses to attack and kill both malignant and normal B cells. In trials to date, the normal B cells regenerate from stem cells within months following treatment with IDEC-C2B8. In addition, trials to date have shown that IDEC-C2B8 does not damage bone marrow, causing immunosuppression and anemia, or exhibit any other significant toxicities that overlap with those produced by chemotherapy or high-dose radiation. Thus, treatment with IDEC-C2B8 has not precluded patients from receiving subsequent chemotherapeutic treatments. In addition, IDEC-C2B8 is administered on an outpatient basis over 22 days, versus the four- to eight-month course required for most conventional chemotherapies.

IDEC is developing IDEC-C2B8 in collaboration with Genentech, Inc. of South San Francisco, California, F.Hoffmann-La Roche, Ltd. of Switzerland and Zenyaku Kogyo Co. Ltd. of Japan.

IDEC Pharmaceuticals is a biopharmaceutical company developing products for the long-term management of immune system cancers and autoimmune and inflammatory diseases. The company is currently focused on the treatment of non-Hodgkin's B-cell lymphomas, an immune system cancer, and rheumatoid arthritis. The company's lead immune system cancer and rheumatoid arthritis products are genetically engineered to combat disease through the patient's immune system.

IDEC Pharmaceuticals' press releases are available at no charge through PR Newswire's "Company News On-Call" fax service. For a menu of IDEC's current press releases and quarterly reports or to retrieve a specific release, call (800) 758-5804, ext. 432581 or internet http://www.prnewswire.com.

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IDEC Pharmaceuticals® is a registered U.S. trademark of the company. The company is located at 11011 Torreyana Road, San Diego, CA 92121.